

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, LIVESTOCK & IRRIGATION

March 24, 2009 Hearing on Senate Bill 300

Testimony of John Lammers, Fertilizer Advisory Committee member

EXHIBIT 1
DATE 3/24/09
SB 300

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, for the record my name is John Lammers. I am the owner of Lammers Feed and Seed in Harlowton which is also a retailer of fertilizers. I am a member of the Fertilizer Advisory Committee.

Some 38 years ago, the 1971 Montana Legislature passed legislation which provides an assessment for research and education programs. The purpose was to "improve Montana's economy by providing farmers and ranchers the most accurate information possible about fertilizer use and soil management for greatest profits consistent with environmental protection on the many varied soil and climatic conditions of the states."

These research and education programs are administered by the Montana State University directors of the Agricultural Experiment Station and Extension Service with direct input from the Fertilizer Advisory Committee. The committee consists of five agricultural producers and two fertilizer industry representatives. The directors of the Montana Department of Agriculture (Ron de Yong), the Agricultural Experiment Stations (Dr. Jeff Jacobsen) and the Extension Service (Dr. Doug Steele) provide overall leadership.

In addition to the research and education components, a portion of the fertilizer act supports regulation in the Montana Department of Agriculture. The current assessment of 60 cents/ton is distributed: 25 cents/ton to the Montana Department of Agriculture for regulatory programs, 35 cents/ton (minus a one per cent Montana Department of Agriculture administrative fee) split equally between the Agricultural Experiment Station for research and the Extension Service for education.

In Senate Bill 300, the 35 cents/ton for research and education increases to 75 cent/ton and changes the percentage from 50 per cent for research and 50 per cent for education to 75 per cent for research and 25 percent for education to assure the vast majority of the increase goes to research. The education portion increases somewhat with the bulk of the increase going to research. This legislation does not increase the 25 cent fee for regulation.

Senate Bill 300 provides for research which has economic and environment benefits to not only Montana agriculture but all Montanans. With many fertilizers costing \$500 per ton and more, the 40 cents per ton increase in the fertilizer check-off is minimal. The cost goes from 60 cents per ton to \$1 per ton. We have more crops today and it's more important that ever to assure efficient fertilizer use to generate income for a healthy agricultural economy.

Please support Senate Bill 300. I'll try to answer any questions. Thank you. Mr. Chairman.